

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT M 00346 01 OF 02 100744Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
/061 W
-----050652 101108Z /13

R 080600Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3118
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC FOR HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT MORESBY 0346

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PP
SUBJECT: SOMARE PROPOSES TOUGH LEADERSHIP CODE

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER SOMARE SHOOK PARLIAMENT MARCH 3 WITH A CALL FOR A TOUGH LEADERSHIP CODE WHICH WOULD FORCE NATIONAL LEADERS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN RETAINING THEIR BUSINESS INTERESTS AND THEIR POLITICAL POSITIONS. PROMINENT GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION LEADERS VOICED THEIR SUPPORT BUT FIVE PEOPLE'S PROGRESS PARTY MINISTERS WALKED OUT ON THE SPEECH. SOMARE HAS PUT HIS JOB ON THE LINE AND IS EXPECTED TO WIN APPROVAL. HOWEVER, ONE ADVERSE RESULT COULD WELL BE THE LOSS OF SOME OF ALL TOO SCARCE MINISTERIAL TALENT. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER SOMARE TOOK THE PARLIAMENT BY SURPRISE ON MARCH 3 BY PROPOSING A "TOUGH NEW CODE OF LEADERSHIP" UNDER WHICH CABINET MINISTERS, DEPARTMENTAL HEADS, HEADS OF STATUTORY AGENCIES AND PROVINCIAL PREMIERS AND SECRETARIES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SELL THEIR BUSINESS INTERESTS OR RESIGN. THE LEGISLATION (DETAILS BEING POUCHED
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PAGE 02 PORT M 00346 01 OF 02 100744Z

TO EA/ANP) WOULD AFFECT ABOUT 100 NATIONAL FIGURES WHO WOULD BE PERMITTED TO SELL THEIR INTERESTS PRIVATELY OR AT MARKET RATES TO A PUBLIC TRUST ADMINISTERED BY THE GOVERNMENT. TRANSFERS OF ASSETS TO OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED.

3. SOMARE'S SPEECH FOLLOWED BY A FEW DAYS THE TABLING

OF THE ANNUAL OMBUDSMAN COMMISSION REPORT TO PARLIAMENT, A REPORT WHICH CRITICIZED THE INCREASED MATERIALISM AMONG NATIONAL LEADERS. THE PRIME MINISTER STATED, "I HAVE BECOME GRAVELY CONCERNED THAT WE AS NATIONAL LEADERS ARE PUTTING OURSELVES IN A POSITION WHERE WE ARE BOUND TO BE SEVERELY TEMPTED TO PUT OUR OWN PERSONAL GAIN ABOVE NATIONAL GOALS. I AM DETERMINED TO ENSURE THAT THERE ARE NO PAYOFFS IN THE FUTURE". SOMARE, WHO HAS TRANSPORT AND TRADE INTERESTS, SAID HE WOULD SELL THEM.

4. FOLLOWING AN INITIAL SHOCK, FIRST REACTIONS IN PARLIAMENT WERE FAVORABLE. FURTHER REACTION HAS DEVELOPED SLOWLY AS PARLIAMENT IS IN A ONE WEEK RECESS. SOMARE IS COUNTING ON PANGU SUPPORT. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CHAN REPORTEDLY BACKED SOMARE PERSONALLY BUT STATED PUBLICLY THAT THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESS PARTY (PPP) HAD NO POLICY ON THE CODE AND WOULD LEAVE IT TO INDIVIDUALS TO DECIDE UPON. ONE SOURCE HAS TOLD US THAT CHAN WAS MUCH ANGERED BY THE PROPOSAL, AND CERTAINLY HE WILL HIMSELF BE FACED WITH A DECISION AS HE AND HIS FAMILY HAVE EXTENSIVE BUSINESS INTERESTS. FIVE PPP MINISTERS HAD WALKED OUT ON SOMARE'S SPEECH. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE MOVE, AS DID PAPUA BESENA'S PARLIAMENTARY LEADER, JAMES MOPIO.

5. THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WILL CONSIDER THE CODE
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PAGE 03 PORT M 00346 01 OF 02 100744Z

MARCH 8. SOMARE EXPECTS CABINET SUPPORT AND IS STAKING HIS POSITION ON ENACTING THE CODE, SAYING, "IF PEOPLE DON'T LIKE IT, I'M PREPARED TO BE A BACKBENCHER". ONE OF THE PM'S PRINCIPAL DEPUTIES TOLD AN EMBOFF MARCH 3 THAT SOMARE WAS ABSOLUTELY SERIOUS WHEN HE SAID THE BILL WOULD GO THROUGH OR HE WOULD RESIGN. THERE HAS BEEN SOME CONCERN THAT THE PROPOSAL COULD JEOPARDIZE THE PANGU-PPP COALITION AS THE DELICATELY-CONSTRUCTED SOMARE MINISTRY WILL RECEIVE SOME JOLTS AS THE PROPOSAL IS IMPLEMENTED. HOWEVER, ADVERSE IMPACT MAY BE LIMITED TO THE RESIGNATION OF SOME MINISTERS WITH SUBSTANTIAL BUSINESS INTERESTS. MINISTERIAL TALENT IS SCARCE AND HIGH POLITICAL OFFICE WILL BECOME LESS ATTRACTIVE.

6. IT IS TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE IMPACT ON PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS OF A SERIOUS INTER-MINGLING OF PERSONAL BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN SOME PROVINCES. IF THIS NEW CODE IS RIGOROUSLY ENFORCED, IT COULD GREATLY REDUCE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP TO THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS OF THE PROVINCES, MOSTLY MEN OF PERSONAL WEALTH AND MOSTLY ENGAGED IN BUSINESS.

NOTE BY OC/T; TELEGRAM DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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PAGE 01 PORT M 00346 02 OF 02 090610Z
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R 080600Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3119
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC FOR HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT MORESBY 0346

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

7. VSOMARE'S MOTIVATION IS SUBJECT OF MUCH CONJECTURE.
AUSTRALIA'S HIGH COMMISSION, WHICH HAS INTIMATE TIES WITH
SOMARE, BELIEVES THE PM IS BOTH ADDRESSING A GROWING
PROBLEM AND ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS PRINCIPLES.
SOMARE REFUSED TO ENTER AN EARLY GOVERNMENT OUT OF PRINCIPLE
AND HE IS A MAN WHO LIKES AN IDEAL TO SHOOT FOR. HE
HAS GRASPED ON TO A NEW ISSUE AND A NEW IDEAL.

8. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SOMARE HAS PUT HIS JOB ON THE
LINE THIS FIRMLY BUT THERE HAS BEEN SOME CONJECTURE ABOUT
HIS LONG-TERM PLANS. HE REPORTEDLY WAS DEPRESSED IN LATE
1977 AND EARLY 1978 AND APPEARED SO TO THE AMBASSADOR IN
JANUARY. RUMORS ABOUT HIS PENDING RESIGNATION WERE
RIFE, RUMORS WHICH THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION APPEARED
NOT TO BELIEVE. THEN, A WEEK AGO IN PARLIAMENT, AN
OPPOSITION MEMBER ASKED SOMARE IF IT WERE TRUE THAT HE
(THE PM) WAS SUPPORTING SIR MAORI KIKI'S CANDIDACY IN
THE UPCOMING PORT MORESBY BY-ELECTION (SEPTEL)
SO THAT KIKI COULD REPLACE HIM AS PM. SOMARE CAME BACK
WITH A RESOUNDING "NO". HOWEVER, SOMETHING PROMPTED
THE QUESTION AND NOW SOMARE SAYS HE IS PUTTING HIS OFFICE
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PAGE 02 PORT M 00346 02 OF 02 090610Z

ON THE LINE IN ORDER TO TOUGHEN THE LEADERSHIP CODE.
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